

By George Onah

Port Harcourt — Following the death of some of the raped 12 female students of University of Port Harcourt last week by ex-militants, the International Federation of Female Lawyers (FIDA) in Rivers State, said it was holding the Federal Government accountable for failure to protect the students from the violation.

Sequel to the attack, the state police command said it had prosecuted 11 of the former gunmen, just as the State Assembly also passed a law prescribing 14 year-jail term for rapists without an option of fine.

In a resolution at the commencement of FIDA Week 2009, the lawyers said Nigerians, particularly Rivers people, should sign a petition to force the Federal Government to account for the “irresponsible and criminal behaviour of the ex-militants”.

At the ceremony, which was attended by former President, Nigerian Bar Association, Mr. O. C. J. Okocha, and other eminent jurists, the female lawyers said the society must “stand up for the raped UNIPORT female students and insist that justice must be done and such impunity must end.”

Speaking on the theme, Ending Violence Against Women and the Girl Child, Executive Director, Project Alert, Mrs. Josephine Effa-Chukwuma, said govern-ments at all levels must act fast to end violence against women.

Effa-Chukwuma said it was regrettable that security agents, particularly the police, still regard wife-beating as a “family matter”, lamenting that no action was taken against a man who beats his wife black and blue.

She also frowned on some segments of the society in Nigeria which consider wife battery as part of the African culture, stating that traditional rulers and religious leaders should rise up and halt every violation of woman’s rights.

However, a female member of the State Assembly, Mrs. Maureen Tamuno, representing Ogu/Bolo Constituency, said FIDA should not limit its campaign to women and the girl-child, but use an all embracing phrase as ‘Violence against the human person’ because the boy-child and husbands are maltreated by wives too.

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Women in river state (and across nigeria) should be more watchful with where they go and how they expose themselves to this kind of criminal abuse. I am not saying its their fault, but in Nigeria there is no law, no police protection and no justice when they are raped abused or battered. The best thing they can do for themselves is prevent by all possible means.

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